

Rasānanda Satya Shivānjali

□ Śrī Ganeshāya Namah

vande 'haṁ śrī-guroḥ śrī-yuta-pada-kamalaṁ śrī-gurūn vaiṣṇavāṁś ca
śrī-rūpaṁ sāgrajātaṁ saha-gaṇa-raghunāthānviṭaṁ taṁ sa-jīvaṁ
sādvaitaṁ sāvadhūtaṁ parijana-sahitaṁ kṛṣṇa-caitanya-devaṁ
śrī-rādhā-kṛṣṇa-pādān saha-gaṇa-lalitā-śrī-viśākhānviṭāṁś ca

I offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of my spiritual master and of all the other preceptors on the path of devotional service. I offer my respectful obeisances unto all the Vaiṣṇavas and unto the six Gosvāmīs, including Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, Jīva Gosvāmī and their associates. I offer my respectful obeisances unto Śrī Advaita Ācārya Prabhu, Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and all His devotees, headed by Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura. I then offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and all the gopīs, headed by Lalitā and Viśākhā.

Upon waking at Nidhivan in the forest of Braj, Radha-Kṛṣṇa nestle their feet against each other under a blanket of camphor-like silk upon a flower mattress. Rupa-Manjari and Rati-Manjari, already awake welcome them from yoga-nidra flashing winning smiles. Eager to serve the divine couple Rupa fetches a silver tray inlaid with filigree and bearing an assortment of accoutrements, such as: scented rose water, aguru incense, napkins, tulasi leaves and pomegranate seeds. Kṛṣṇa inhales the musky aromas while Radha softly bites down on a tulsi leaf tasting it's transcendental flavour. Then Syama crunches a few pomegranate seeds and beams a smile tinged with reddish juice which dribbles from his lips. Gupu-manjari lets out a giggle at this funny sight and Kṛṣṇa flashes a sidelong glance at her, grinning as he does so. Radha gently takes Syama's arm and embraces it to her face. Knowing Gopalraj's desire instinctively Rati wipes the black snake of Vrndavan's mouth with a napkin before offering Him a chalice of nectar infused pani water.

Sitting on the edge of the bed, Radha crosses her legs beneath her silken sari and places Her hands on Her knees. Tungavidya who had been asleep, roused by the sweet cacophany stretches her arms above her head nonchalantly and sighs a contented sigh. She snappily says to one of her sister sakhi's "Please pass me the Vina." Striking up a mellifluous tune the other musical maestros attend their Mrdangam, Hand-Cymbals and wait for the moment to play. The Vina sings soft and slow and the nearby trees droop their branches to better hear the musical vibrations. Kanai-Rai look at each other and then nod in affection and approval towards Tungavidya and her friends, but Tungavidya does not see. Her eyes closed in concentration on the raga she instead sees Syama's form in the subtlety of her minds eye and her bliss increases,

refracted in the vibrancy of the Gita. Up starts the mrdangam: tata tata ghe na tata tata dha tata tata ghe na tati tata doop; and Chitra charmingly begins to sing. "Klim Radha-Madhava mangalam shantih, prema vilas gata tu sadhu, yatha uta madhurya aparajitah..." Hearing this everyone swoops in the sky of rapture, eyelids half close and hairs stand on end. The song goes on and the kartals join in, tinkling deft staccato beats. Gaurangi Radha stands and tries to pull Krsna up too, but He pretends to be uninterested despite also wanting to dance. Knowing His intention to resist Radarani tugs even harder until the rascally rasacarya lets go and she falls backwards.

Luckily Indurekha is attentive and catches Her in her arms, with formidable strength in her arms Indu surges Radha forwards. The kirtan rises in a ferocious crescendo and lovelorn Radhika is caught by Her lustrous lover. Picking her up by her wide hips Krsna swirls Her Three-Sixty degrees and She buries Her face in the arc of His neck. Feeling immensely audacious Paramgati Krsna slips a fold of Radha's garment off Her shoulder. Recoiling like a golden serpent Radhika wags Her finger at Her impetuous lover and nose pointed to the now ashen sky jauntily struts off in an Easterly direction with Indurekha and Rangadevi arm in arm. Sudevi follows her sister and turns her head to see Syama, his eyes shimmering with the ointment of affection [snigdanjana]. Placing one hand on his Hip the rebellious love Lord sighs.

Returning from picking flowers together Lalita and Vishaka are overwhelmed with the pangs of separation when they see Radha has left the kunja. "Where have you Two been?" snaps Syama. Pupils dilating as they see the form of their beloved Lalita Vishaka feast on the form of Ghana-Syama and reply:

"We have been picking flowers from the campaka bushes down by the Yamuna." says Vishaka

"At this time of the morning?" Syama says, curiously.

"While the great wind sleeps the flags still flap." Quips Lalita

"When the cock crows the farmer's wife wakes!" Retorts Radharaman

"We are already awake!" Say the girls; in unison.

"Then please dress your Gopipriya."

"I'm going to find Swamini." Lalita says, and wanders off humming an echo of Chitra's current song.

Vishaka then takes Syama to a side bower in their kunja mansion where there are several intricately patterned wearing garments hanging on brown and ochre branches. She surreptitiously loosens His copper coloured turban, which, already dishevelled from sleep falls away easily. His long black hair cascades over His shoulders like a dark waterfall. Arched eyebrows dance very slowly as they begin the sringara ritual. Lifting the Kaustubha gem from His neck, suspended on a golden linked chain Vishaka carefully places it in a trees' alcove before turning back to Syama with a slight curtsy. His graceful threefold bending form resembling a crooked tamala tree He takes her hand to hand and they come closer to each other. Looking down Syama lets her remove his dark saffron cummerbund and then she skillfully unties the knot in His scintillating yellow dhoti. Graciously approaching and wrapping a lusciously soft gamcha towel round His waist priya-gopi Vishaka feels indescribable ecstasy. The Lord of Gokul radiates rays of ujjala-rasa as He awaits the forthcoming snana. Bringing a pitcher full of scented water

warmed gently on a gobar fire by the manjaris, Nayana-Mani stands next to her friends while Vishaka pours cleansing water on Syama's shoulders, chest and back. Massaging with great love that most powerful of all chests, whereupon Lakshmi resides, she jokes with Him and they all laugh heartily. Drying Krsna with a second towel and instructing Nayana-Mani to pass certain clothes Vishaka averts her gaze as He further dries Himself and ties his kaupins. Looking towards the larger kunja bower where sweet sounds still resonate, she sees through a gap in the foliage a smiling Champakalata spying on the scene; who then whisks away. Tying Syama's dhoti in a unique way it looks just like an aureolin lightning bolt crested against the dark sky of His blueish-black complexion. Next, a fresh orange cummerbund is wrapped and tucked and the Kaustubha-Gem placed once more round the neck of the lovelorn debauchee known as Krsna, and Gopinatha to the gopis. Vishaka further ties His turban and decorates it with gold & silver lace. Nayana-Mani reverentially brings a beautiful peacock feather for her beloved to wear. Crowned with this fabulous feather Syama wobbles His head displaying a proud face, and nearby the peacocks herald the onset of day with their piercing song... ke kai, ke kai, ke kai!

Meanwhile Lalita catches up to Radhika and they greet each other with spontaneous jubilation. In a small entourage they wander aimlessly in the woods savouring the sights and sounds of dawn breaking.

Khanda 2 - Returning Home

Leaving the dense forest of illusion which hides the pastimes of Sri Syam; granting them privacy. Radha and the sakhis walk along the enchanting banks of Yamuna devi, whose crystalline waters produce intensely sweet sounds. In chorus with these waters Radhika's ankle bells tinkle like straw dolls rustling. Swinging her arms to and fro Lalita whisps along her padma dancing like the flowing river dances. To a beat sublime and slow the gopis and manjaris all smile at different times, alternated between querrelsome frowns.

"Where are we heading?" One young footmaiden asks, forgetting in her ecstasy that they are simply returning home
"Array mitra." Three of the girls say in unison
"Where did your intelligence go last night?" Padmini says

Feeling drowsy some of the manjaris complain that it's too far for them to walk and cast their sulken kajjal smeared eyes to the ground. Karunamayi Radha being the encapsulation of compassion displays an inscrutable look, and adjusts her purple choli cloth onto Her shoulder.

The entourage stop at the banks edge, which is like a dusty goshala. Golden and ochre dust which soothes the chitta becomes beautified by touch of the gopis decorated feet. As they boldly tread through the go dhuli their ankle bells stop sounding since the dust is so deep. Finding the waters edge they enter the waters forgetting to remove their cloth due to remembrance of Krishna's own exquisite clothing, which adorns his balam body.

Hearing the whinces of the sneyadikar gopis Premswarupini smiles beatifically and tenderly places her hand on the shoulder of one.

"Do not be afraid of these waters priya."

"They are not so cold after all." says Vineet

Feeling renewed determination the tadbhavecchatmikas all then enter the water to bathe. One sakhi playfully splashes another, and thus initiates wonderful sporting. The dear friends all laugh as their hair becomes drenched in Yamuna devi's crystalline water. One gopi dives beneath the waves and tugs at the legs of Two sisters. Screaming like a young trumpeting she elephant they furrow their brows and think thus: 'Oh my, who is this pulling my leg, it can only be our beloved Gopinath.'" Surfacing the prankster rises to the laughter also, her brow furrowing with delight."

Khanda 3 - In which Rupa Meets Mani

Breaking away from the paksha, Rupa offers her pranams and sets out on the dust path through the dangling malati vines; after taking her leave. Strolling happily along the way to Chaddikar she is singing a mellifluous tune when rapidly a young girl appears before her. Abashedly her cheeks turn red and she blushes. A radiant glow seems to surround her.

"Namonamah." Says Rupa

"Namaskaram."

"Who are you and what are you doing out in this lonely place at such a tender age?"

"Cintamani prakara."

"Whaaat? Dear girl you are not about to find any cintamani gems in this foul place, better you return to your parents house and serve them." Said Rupa

The girl whisks her hair back with a deft flick of the wrist and smiles. Rupa is taken aback by the girls confidence and simultaneous sweet hearted nature, and blushes a little herself out of spontaneous affection for this rasa-drenched mogra flower of a girl.

"Krupya priya apka pura nam kya hai."

"Mama nama Manih"

Hmm thinks Rupa, whenever this girl speaks she replies in Sanskritam. Perhaps she is highly intelligent - let me test her ability futher.

Khanda 4 - The girls reach Barshana

After some time happily walking the dust paths on the edge of the Yamuna and passing out of the fragrant forest. Radha, Lalita and the others approach the

palace of Vrsabhanu Maharaj. Entering through a beautiful arch decorated with beautiful malati flowers, they trapse into the courtyard. Smiling a beatific beaming smile blossoming with sweet vatsalya bhava and overflowing parental affection, Kirtida Devi welcomes her beloved daughter.

"Namonamah Radhika." She says with genuine love in her voice.

"Pranams mata." Radha replies

"What are you and your girlfriends doing out in this early morning."

Radha suddenly panics in the most frightful bliss when she thinks of where they've actually been, and becomes stambha.

"Ohh, we have been to pick flowers for morning puja of the Sun God." Lalita quickly replies sharp and quick, but without a hint of duplicitous nature in her tone.

"Very good." Kirtida says "Pass them to me and I shall take them to the temple room."

Letting out a gasp as the group realise they have no flowers at all in their possession, the lustrous damsels exchange furtive glances. Thinking that an age has gone by there distress increases a million-fold, yet to them this distress feels like thick treacle like bliss due to their constant remembrance of Gopinath.

"Come on, be quick about it, the Sun has nearly risen." Kirtida says

Hearing mention of the Sun Kasturi remembers the Kaustubha gem that adorns the chest of Govinda. Immediately feeling shy in the presence of this memory she catches hold of the hems of her skirt, curtseys, and as her sari creates an empty kunda she suddenly sees there an array of white, pink and amber champa petals. 'How is this' she thinks. There we forgot to pick flowers today!

Reaching out to show the sweet smelling leaf blades to Rupa she almost faints in ecstasy from the delicious aroma and rising pride at having the flowers. Now believing it was she who picked the petals, she winces as Rupa's eyes go agog at the sight of her. Delighted Rupa sees the patterns on Kasturi's sari and takes them to be real flowers.

"Radhe Radhe!" sings Rupa "Here are the flowers we picked."

Kirtida recoils as she sees Kasturi holding her sari with nothing but the floral pattern on it. Just as she is about to rebuke them for teasing her, she steps closer and there before her eyes, a combination of turquoise, green and maroon magnolia petals appear. Her eyes swim and she recoils.

"Err, thike children." Please take the flowers to the temple room now for I am feeling a little faint."

Radha casts an askance glance at Lalita, and as Kirtida stumbles away says:

"Where did the flowers come from?"

Lalita shrugs her shoulders and grins

"They changed colour." says Kasturi

"Some mystic yogi must be hiding nearby and used his siddhis to give us the flowers." Says Lavanga

"How strange" says Rupa

Let us go inside before he appears, and with that they all scuttle into the cintamani jeweled palace.

Khanda 5 - Krsna's breakfast

Meanwhile, Rasaraj Krishna is in his father's house, in the temple room of Ganesha. Many cintamani gems adorn the walls. The emeralds, rubies, topaz casts glinting coloured rays of dappled light on the floors and ceilings; but the ghana-syama complexion of the Lord of Rasa cast sapphire hues into the eyes of his beloved father, mother, brother and sister.

"Vakratunda mahakaya surya koti samaprabha nirvignam kuru me deva sarva karyeshu sarvatha" They all chant in unison. The mellifluous sound reverberating in the marble chamber.

Yasoda maa beams a blissful smile as she lovingly watches Krishna and Balarama perform the aarti of Ganapati Baba. Offering ghee lamps, incense and more choice prayers, the boys look like Two majestic trees standing before the altar. One Tamal and One Teak. They both wear effulgent flower garlands made by the elderly gopis of Nanda's court. They finish the aarti and both take seats on the lavish patterned rug. Nanda baba, seated on an asana in siddhasana begins to recite Veda and the party descends into deep ambrosial ecstasy. Nevertheless Yasoda cannot but help, now and then opening her eyes ever so slightly so as to gaze at her Three children with great pride and motherly affection. As the sonorous voice of Nanda baba sends powerful vibrations throughout the land of Nandagaon and beyond, Krishna's stomach rumbles, playfully reminding him he is hungry.

After some time in rapt attention, that best of all families file out into the adjoining corridor and down towards their dining hall. A wonderful breakfast feast of many delectable eatables are arrayed on a fine wooden table. Taking their breakfast in tranquility and speaking sweet words to each other they languish in the bhava of happy family life. When suddenly, a pounding knock, knock comes from the large carved door. Slowly Nanda baba looks up unconcerned, but Yasoda drops her spoon, her neatly arranged hair trembling out of its fix. Krishna, Balarama and Subhadra's necks snap round to look. As the door is surreptitiously opened by a respected servant, there stands a dishevelled yogi.

Khanda 6

Speaking many clever words Rupa tested the nava-dasi whose name she learnt is Mani. Formalities of introduction over, the young Mani tentatively accepted Rupa's arm link and strolled with her to find the divine couple Radha-Krsna. Rupa still thought what an intelligent girl Mani was; speaking

Sanskrit and the such. Still the mood had changed by the gentle unfurlment of Rupa's own bhava, which loosened the shackles of intelligence and caused the arisal of blooming friendship between the Two.

Being just a pair of youthful maidens One would think they were scared to walk alone in the forest, out of the range of Nanda Raja's guards. Such is the nature of the lovers of Syamakrishna however. They feel know fear to walk in the forest of Vrndavan since in their hearts they belong to their Swamini [Radha], Syama belongs to Radha, therefore Syama belongs to them; and they think he will protect them at every step. The forest of Vrndavan is dense in places and not so dense in others. Some might argue that it is incorrect to call it a forest, preferring the term 'woods' or a collection of glades, bowers and fragrant vines. Either which way there in that delectable coppice that they found themselves in, they were very happy and arm in arm set of to rejoin the entourage.

Being an expert orienteer Rupa quickly led the new girl to the thicket which Radha, Tungavidya, Kasturi, Lavanga and the other's were now resting in. Casting furtive glances the nava-dasi Mani looked very much like a small orange parrot, tilting her head this way and that and seeing all the faces of the paksha.

"Hello, don't be shy." said Tungavidya, who didn't have her Vina then, but was playing ornate rhythms on a pair of kartalas.
"This girl casts her eyes about so much, we should call her Nayana-Mani." said Radha, and they all laughed... except Mani

Immediately sensing her discomfort at being the butt of the joke, they stopped laughing and invited Mani to sit, which she did.